

PRESS RELEASE

B6 Row Vitamin Consumers Call for Rooker's Resignation

In a letter to Tony Blair the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy, representing 2,000 members and some 50,000 supporters, has called for the Food Minister's resignation over his handling of the vitamin B6 controversy. Written by the Society's director Linda Lazarides, the letter reads as follows:

You may be aware that Food Minister Jeff Rooker has made a proposal that all vitamin B6 supplements above 10 milligrams in strength should be banned unless they have a pharmaceutical licence. Mr Rooker makes this proposal on the advice of a body known as the Committee on Toxicity (COT).

We have investigated the COT's commercial interests and find to our horror that at least nine of its 15 members to our knowledge receive pensions, research funds or consultancy fees from pharmaceutical companies. Since it can hardly be said that the pharmaceutical industry is likely to have the interests of *nutritional* medicine at heart, we are appalled that Jeff Rooker has ignored the advice of all independent experts in favour of such individuals. Furthermore, he has assured many MPs that he met with myself and other representatives of concerned consumers on 23rd July. However, while assuring us that he would not be influenced by industry, he brought with him to that meeting a member of the COT who receives a pension from Glaxo-Wellcome, research fellowship from Glaxo, and consultancy fees from Schering Plough and Smith Kline Beecham. This individual proceeded to assure us that vitamin B6 products which have been on the market for many years are a risk to health. Vague references to "dog studies" were found to refer to doses 30 times higher than the 100 mg B6 limit which SPNT is supporting. He offered no other evidence to support the COT's decision.

We consider this a very serious matter indeed and now intend to call for Mr Rooker's resignation since his actions are clearly biased by elements other than proper scientific data. A briefing paper is enclosed for fuller information.

We sincerely hope that Labour will see fit to conduct an investigation into the points raised.

ENDS

*For further information and a summary of vitamin B6 research studies
call Linda Lazarides on 01825 872914*